

LOCAL REGIONAL & STATE

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Council OKs maglev funds

By Lisa Mascaro
Staff Writer

Half-million would examine Ontario route

Despite skepticism over bringing a maglev train to Los Angeles, the City Council on Tuesday unanimously approved spending more than \$500,000 to join a regional study of a line from West Los Angeles to Ontario Airport.

The council voted 14-0 on what many members called a traffic solution for future generations.

"We have an opportunity to exert leadership in the region," said City Councilman Antonio Villaraigosa, chairman of the council's Transportation Committee. Villaraigosa said he, too, still had questions about

magnetic levitation.

"Unfortunately, Los Angeles has been missing in action. It's time for us to be part of the debate. It's time for us to be part of the solution."

The city is the last of three regional bodies to support the Southern California Association of Governments efforts to pursue a first \$5.5 billion segment of a regional maglev system with the 55-mile line between West Los Angeles and Ontario Airport.

SCAG was seeking \$1 million from Ontario, San Bernardino Associated Governments and Los Angeles to match \$2.5 million in federal funds secured by

Sen. Dianne Feinstein to further study the line's feasibility.

It also wants to create a joint powers authority with those bodies to oversee the process.

SCAG says the 112-mph line would be built through a public-private partnership with government loans that would be paid off with ticket revenues of about \$10 per one-way ride.

Lockheed Martin, which already has a SCAG contract to help with the engineering work, wants to design, build and operate the system.

The environmental study is expected to take two years, with the route possibly operating

before 2015.

"This is the technology for the 21st century," said SCAG executive director Mark Pisano after the vote. "The time has come for us to start using it."

But transportation advocates like Friends of the Green Line and The Transit Coalition said in letters to City Hall the money should be spent on practical solutions like expanding Metrolink or Metropolitan Transportation Authority routes.

Also, Councilman Alex Padilla wants the city to consider the state's efforts to bring a high-speed rail line through the area,

while Councilwoman Wendy Greuel questioned where the study money would come from — the city plans to have Los Angeles World Airports or city transportation funds pay the \$563,000 toward the study.

Greuel also urged the council to promote short-term fixes like those along the Ventura and San Diego freeways that can be done "in our lifetime."

Councilwoman Janice Hahn supported looking at maglev.

"Unless we do something now to make way for the growth that is coming to Los Angeles, we will make a gridlock situation," she said.

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